



February 24, 2025

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

On behalf of the Oregon Association of Defense Counsel (“OADC”), we offer our strong support of SB 96. OADC is an organization of approximately 550 lawyers in the State of Oregon who devote a significant portion of their practice to the defense of civil litigation.

Our organization has long believed that judicial salaries in this state must be increased to attract the most qualified and talented members of the Bar to judicial appointments. When adjusted for cost of living, Oregon ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> in the country for judicial salaries. Quite frankly, it is embarrassing that we are so far behind the rest of the nation in compensating our judiciary.

Low judicial compensation is harmful to our economy. Right now, only a third of Oregon Judicial Department judges have been on the bench 10 years or more, and many are now nearing retirement or otherwise leaving early. At the same time, cases brought to the courts are becoming increasingly complex. But with Oregon judicial salaries falling 30% below competitive rates for public-sector attorneys Oregon, recruiting experienced public *or* private sector civil litigators to the bench is challenging. Civil law is complex and takes time to master, and businesses and taxpayers need certainty that when they have disputes, those disputes will be handled effectively and as efficiently as possible. When they are not, it can have enormous negative financial consequences for business. If we are to continue to recruit and retain judges prepared to handle a complex civil docket, Oregon’s abysmal judicial salaries must be addressed.

SB 96 will increase the annual salaries of the Justices of the Supreme Court and Judges of the Court of Appeals, Circuit Courts, and Oregon Tax Court, making it more likely to attract judges who understand the civil justice system, especially complex civil cases. This is extremely important and necessary to promote the judiciary and advance the interests of the Civil Bar.

**OADC urges your strong support of SB 96.**

Sincerely,

OADC Government Affairs Committee

Daniel Larsen – President

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